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**MAN SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRING TO BURN HOME
OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY IN TAYLOR, MICHIGAN**

Ricky Cotton of Taylor, Mich., was sentenced yesterday to 78 months in prison for conspiring to violate the civil rights of an African-American family in Taylor

On July 28, 2002, Cotton and several associates conspired to burn the home of an African-American family because they did not want the family living in their neighborhood. Cotton's co-conspirators eventually broke a window in the family's home, poured in a flammable substance, and lit the substance on fire.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "The court's sentence metes out an appropriately strong penalty for the racially animated violence that this defendant conspired to perpetrate. The community has every right to expect that an attempt to burn a family out of their home because of the color of their skin will be met with swift, sure prosecution, as well as a serious punishment."

Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division said, "The actions of the conspirators in this case were despicable and intolerable. The Justice Department takes very seriously violent crimes bred of ignorance and hatred, and we will vigorously prosecute those who violate the civil rights of our fellow Americans."

Wayland Mullins, one of Cotton's co-conspirators, was convicted by a jury on April 20, 2007, for conspiring to violate the family's civil rights; for violating the civil rights of the family; for using fire in the commission of a felony; and for conspiring to obstruct justice. Mullins is scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 23, 2007.

Michael Richardson, another conspirator, pleaded guilty on Sept. 21, 2006, to participating in the conspiracy to burn the house; to violating the family's federally protected housing rights; to using fire in the commission of a felony; and to conspiring to obstruct justice. Richardson is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 6, 2007.

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